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Cross Burning Case Resolved

By KEITH L. MARTIN

A Duxbury man has received probation for burning a cross at Holy Family Church earlier this year.

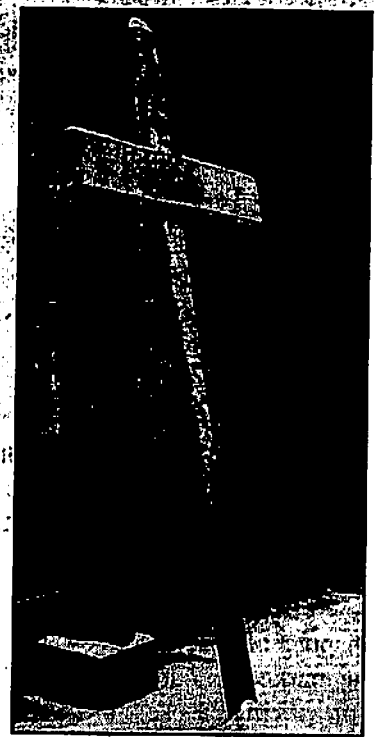
Gregory Cerne, 20, of Bayridge Lane, pleaded guilty on Friday to a charge of destruction of property under \$250 before Judge Thomas Brownell in Plymouth District Court. Additional charges of arson and property damage to intimidate were dropped against Cerne by the Plymouth County District Attorney's Office.

The charges stem from an incident in the early morning hours of February 21 when Monsignor William Glynn discovered a burnt cross at the entrance to the church. Duxbury police say a confidential informant came to the station with a list of suspects and after questioning, Cerne confessed to the crime the next day. At his arraignment on February 23, his 20th birthday, Assistant District Attorney Maryclaire Flynn said that in a videotaped confession, Cerne said that he and friends had been drinking and he alone had gone to the church, leaned the cross up against the entrance and set it on fire.

Cerne was released to his parents and ordered to stay away from drugs and alcohol by Judge Gregory Baler.

Back in court on Friday, Cerne pleaded guilty to the charge of destruction of property, which under \$250 is considered a misdemeanor, and was reduced from the original charge against him of destruction over \$250, a felony.

In addition to one year of probation, Cerne must remain alcohol and drug free and submit to random testing, remain in school at Quincy College and perform 100 hours of community service. He must also write a letter of apology to Msgr. Glynn, whom he has



Twenty-year-old Gregory Cerne was placed on probation for one year for placing and burning a cross at the entrance of Holy Family Church on Presidents' Day.

talked to at length, including right after his arrest.

Msgr. Glynn said Friday that he had already forgiven Cerne, a member of the church, and was glad that the arson and intimidation charges were dismissed.

"Gregory has welcomed back [to the church] and now has to forgive himself and put his life back together," he said. "I want him to have a new start and hold nothing against him."

Cerne's attorney, Colleen Carroll, was equally pleased with the dismissal of the two charges against her client and the outcome of the case.

"I think it was appropriate...given the facts of the case, the lack of [criminal] record and the feelings of the community," she said. "The monsignor is in agreement with dropping the charges as were the police department, so I think both sides are pleased."